

NPS Natural Sounds Program

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



NPS AS A Cooperating Agency



FAA Environmental Forum
May 16 2006



Who We Are

- Size
- Units
- People
- Services
- Visitors



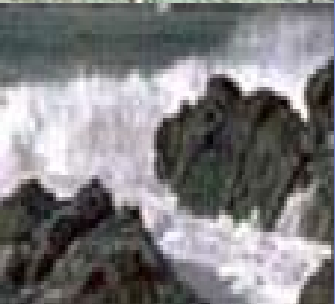
NPS Natural Sounds Program

- Who We are
- Where We Are - Physically
- Organizationally
- Staff Expertise.



Program Responsibilities

- Acoustic
- Planning
- Technical Assistance Requests
- Military Liaison
- Interpretation/Outreach/Education



NPS Mission

“to conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wild life therein”

“provide for the enjoyment of the same in such manner any by such means as will leave them *unimpaired* for the enjoyment of future generations”

(16 USC 1, Organic Act)



Natural Sounds Program Mission Statement

- The Natural Sounds Program works to protect, maintain or restore soundscape resources and values in units of the National Park System
- We fulfill this mission by working in partnership with parks and others to increase scientific and public understanding of the value and character of park soundscapes and to eliminate or minimize noise intrusions.

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Relevant NPS Management Policies and Directors Orders

- 4.1.5 Restoration of Natural Systems
- 4.9 Soundscape Management
- 8.2 visitor Use
- 8.4.3 General Aviation
- 8.4.4 Administrative Use
- 8.4.5 Military Aviation
- 8.4.6 Commercial Air Tour Management
- DO 2 – Resource Stewardship Planning
- DO12 - Conservation Planning, Environmental Impact Analysis and Decision Making

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NPS Management Policies

- Fundamental mandate to conserve park resources and values
- “One of the primary guiding principles [of the National Park Service] is that, when there is conflict between the protection of resources and their use, conservation will be predominant” (Fran Mainella, March 2, 2006)
- Courts have consistently upheld this interpretation



4.9 Soundscape Management Policy

- NPS will **preserve** to the greatest extent possible the natural soundscapes of parks.
- NPS will **restore** degraded soundscapes to the natural condition wherever possible..
- And will **protect** natural soundscapes from degradation due to noise

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COOPERATING AGENCY RELATIONSHIP



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NEPA The NPS Way :

Three Basic Requirements

- No significant adverse impacts
- No impairment
- Duty to “conserve”

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Cooperating Agency Status

- Deference to Agency Expertise
- DO12
- MOU Would Articulate Roles and Responsibilities of each Agency



Top Issues That Influence our Review of Environmental Documents

- Potential Impacts to Park Resources
- Potential Impacts to Visitor Use
- Information Provided
- Methodology Used



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Park Resources: What They Are and Why We Care

- Natural Resources (Air including viewsheds, Water, **Sound**, Biological, Geological)
- Cultural/Social
- Historical
- Other unique or designated resources or areas such as wilderness, world heritage sites, research areas, wild and scenic rivers
- Visitor opportunity and experience

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Why We Care continued

- **Biological**
- **SoundScapes**
- **Cultural**
- **Visitor Use**





Components of a Productive Cooperating Agency Relationship

- respect and appreciation of agency culture, mission and expertise
- Make an effort to “cooperate”
- The Earlier the Better (e.g., Zion)



Aviation Impacts To Park Resources



Impact Analysis Methodology and Thresholds

- existing literature
- existing standards
- consultation with Subject matter experts
- consultation with other agencies
- professional judgment
- Quantitative analysis v. qualitative



Aviation Impacts and DO 12

- Impacts must be evaluated in terms of context, duration, intensity in order to compare alternatives
- Impact indicators and Metrics
- Impact indicators are compared to Impact levels

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